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ABSTRACT

A recent study measured the attitudes toward teaching as a career among selected United States military personnel. The study dealt with persons leaving two branches of the armed service, the Army and the Navy, based on the assumption that they represented the bulk of the persons on active duty who comprise a potential source of teacher candidates. An attitudinal survey was distributed at two military installations to persons in their last week of active service. A group of veterans already attending college was drawn from a major university and included. A total of 171 participants were represented in the study. The results indicated a highly positive attitude toward teaching as a career on the part of military personnel. It is suggested that these positive attitudes toward a career in teaching were of sufficient strength to indicate that recruiting veterans for teacher preparation programs would be successful. The survey instrument is appended. (JD)

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SELECTED MILITARY ATTITUDES TOWARD A CAREER IN TEACHING: A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF TEACHER CANDIDATES

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Introduction

There is a need for more teachers in America. One estimate places the "teacher gap" at 1.1 million teachers over the next eight years (Shanker, 1984). A more current estimate is contained in the 1986 Carnegie report. It anticipates that "Between 1986 and 1992, 1.3 million new teachers will be hired." This shortage is more than the teacher preparation institutions can currently graduate, or be expected to graduate, to meet the projected needs of the next decade and beyond (AACTE, 1985 & A Nation Prepared, 1986).

Where are the students, those who are to become the teachers of the future? Aside from a basic acceptance of the fact that many will be needed (but no agreement as to exact or approximate numbers), there has been little research or planning to identify teacher candidate resource pools of individuals motivated toward a career in teaching. The education profession needs to identify sources of persons who have had experience of a positive and general nature in life, who are motivated by education and about education, and who have the opportunity, coupled with the discipline, to capitalize on today's existing and emerging teacher preparation programs (Duke, 1984). One national commission identified persons leaving the military service

as a potential source of the needed teacher candidates (AACTE, 1985).

A Potential Source

Each year, many men and women leave the service, either at the end of their current term of service or retire after having served from twenty to thirty years. These people enter the civilian world after spending time in what some have called the "largest adult education system in the world" (Shelborne, 1965). In each of the services, daily activities revolve almost totally around training of one type or another: individual training, unit training, and mission training. This concentration on education and training continues for each individual from their first day until the very end of their service commitment. Certainly, some of the areas or categories of military training encompass tasks not usually found in civilian life - weapons proficiency, for example but military training also spans the full continuum of the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains upon which all education is founded. Programs in the military run the gamut from short, workshop-type courses to rigorous academic programs of one year or longer. In addition, all of the armed forces make use of civilian institutions of higher education for the delivery of continuing education of personnel.

Education is strongly and constantly stressed to all active duty persons. As individuals and in groups, they are told that education is a key to retention on active duty and selection for promotion. This includes education gained outside of the system provided by the military services. A recent graduate of the Army War College proposed the initiation of a college program consisting of formal college level courses. These courses would be an integral part of a serviceperson's enlistment contract (Hovda, 1983). A recent issue of a publication designed for enlisted Naval personnel devoted ten pages to outlining programs of education and educational benefits available to persons while on active duty (Link, pg. 39).

During off-duty time, service personnel have innumerable opportunities to pursue college level education in programs sanctioned by the armed forces and delivered by a wide range of institutions of higher education. As an example of this, a recent report in a military periodical revealed that 306 United State Army personnel earned associate and bachelor degrees during 1984, through the program offered by only one university (Army Times, 1985).

Every month persons leave the armed forces after serving on active duty during which they have encountered repeated periods of informal and formal education and training. Depending upon the actual length of time spent on

active duty, the amount of educational experience can range from six months out of a three year enlistment to five years or more over a career of twenty or more years. One study of a selected group of military officers indicated that they had served one-third of their entire military career in an educational environment (Biderman, 1964).

Military persons of any duration of service are conditioned to return to school at periodic intervals for refresher training or to gain new skills and concepts designed to make them more effective and able to handle greater responsibility. This life-experience tradition, founded on repeated periods of education, should not be overlooked in viewing the military as a source of potential teachers.

Veterans and Education

One activity that many veterans have consistently chosen after separation from active duty is entering some program of education. Based on the 1980 United States Census Report, the Veterans Administration's portrait of the American veteran population shows that 37.2 percent of all veterans gained some credits for attending college and that 18.6 percent of the total veteran population of 28.5 million has obtained bachelor degree status. Almost one-half of those continued their education in post-baccalaureate study (Dienstfrey & Byrne, 1984). While veterans have

traditionally made extensive use of their edcation benefits they have been "... more likely to plan to major in business or in the category 'other fields: technical' and less likely to plan a preprofessional major"[such as education] (Drew & Creager, 1972).

A driving force behind the amount of education obtained by veterans is the economic support they receive through the G.I. Bill. In recent years, during the post-Vietnam era, there have been some changes in the nature of the educational benefits, but Congress has never seriously attempted to rescind the entitlement. The current session of Congress finally made the G. I. Bill a permanent feature of veteran's benefits after a forty-three year life as a temporary program.

The Dimention of the Potential

Because of the shortage of teachers that exists, it is timely and imperative to investigate any group of experienced persons who have a positive attitude toward teaching as a career. Among the personnel leaving military service as career changers there may be a considerable number of individuals who find great satisfaction and challenge in teaching, and who would be a credit to the profession of teaching. There has been little done to explore or develop this potential sources of future teachers. If it is found that persons leaving the military

have a positive attitude toward a career in teaching, there is the potential for mutual benefit accruing to schools that need teachers, teacher preparation programs that need continuous enrollment, and people who need a second career. There is an added economic feature to be considered. Most of the separating military persons will have educational entitlements to defray major portions of their tuition.

There are some programs of current or historical interest that were designed to channel persons leaving the military service toward the teaching career field. One, known as Project Transition, was vocationally oriented and focused on creating a linkage between soon-to-be veterans and local community colleges (Marland, 1971). A recent indicates renewed interest on the part of the military services in placing soon-to-be veterans in vacant vocational education teaching positions. A study was conducted by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education at four locations in the United States in conjunction with the United States Navy (Chase, 1986). The U.S. Navy recently began a cooperative program with Florida universities to prepare officers nearing retirement to become teachers. The academic areas of focus were mathematics, computers, and science. The U. S. Army's new program "Partnership in Excellence" is designed to canvas all separating persons,

determine their educational goals, and assist with college applications (Army Times, 1987).

Previous research has indicated that retired military personnel of the various armed forces seem to hold a favorable attitude toward the general area of education. Some 26.4 percent of a nationwide retiree group who responded to a 1978 study indicated that education was an activity they liked while on active duty (Henry, 1978). From the perspective of school administrators, retired military persons are seen to possess a number of desired personality traits. One study indicates that school administrators ". . .see retired military as competent teachers. . .sincere in the desire to start a new career in education, and as reality oriented" (Dimmick, 1980).

A recent article in a service oriented-periodical indicates that the Army is seeking to increase the rate of participation in education from the current fifty percent to ninety percent by the end of this decade. The Army alone is projected to spend thirty million dollars at colleges and universities for soldiers' tuition costs in 1987 (Army Times, 1986). This emphasis on education while in the service and after service can be turned to the advantage of the teaching profession; a profession that is earnstly seeking a source of persons with a positive attitude about

education and experiences that can be supportive of the traditional American ideals of education.

Results of the Current Study

In view of this a study was conducted to measure the attitude toward teaching as a career among selected military personnel. The study delt with persons leaving two branches of the armed services, the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army, based on the assumption that they represented the bulk of the persons on active duty who comprise a potential source of teacher candidates. This study used an attitudinal survey instrument developed by Merwin and Di Vesta in 1959. A copy is attached as Appendix A. It was first used "... in a day when educators, and the public in general, are concerned about the supply of teachers" and is appropriate for present day concerns of the same nature. The survey was distributed at two military installations to persons in their last week of active service. A group of veterans already attending college was drawn from a major university and included. A total of 171 participants are represented in the study.

Analysis of the data in Table 1 shows that in only two of the eleven items of the attitudinal survey did the Navy participants hold a more positive attitude than Army and Veteran participants. The two items were number four which dealt with teaching being seen as a "wonderful occupation

Table 1

A Comparison of the Mean for Each of the

Eleven Items on the Survey by Participating Groups

Survey Item	Army Group 1	Navy Group 2	Veterans Group 3
1	2.346*	3.045	2.904
2	2.027	2.682	2.288
3	2.520	2.795	2.712
4	4.280	3.750	4.519
5	2.093	3.477	2.423
6	2.067	3.068	2.471
7	2.613	3.227	2.942
8	2.347	3.114	2.490
9	3.547	3.409	3.462
10	2.760	3.091	2.846
11	3.800	3.977	3.686
	(N=75)	(N=44)	(N=52)

* for each item the range is 1 to 6

for anyone" and number nine which asks the respondents to indicate their attitudes about teaching being "as good a job as any".

The veterans group exhibited a more positive attitude toward teaching as a career than the Army group on two of the survey items. The two items were numbers four which dealt with teaching being seen as a "wonderful occupation for anyone" and eleven which seeks to see if the respondents would be amenable to a job in education other than teaching. For all other survey items the responses about attitude toward teaching as a career by the Army group were more positive than the responses from the other two groups.

Table 2 presents the mean attitude of each of the three groups participating in this study as well as the mean attitude from a non-teacher group that utilized the Merwin & Divesta survey instrument when first developed and the mean attitude of a group of 1986-87 career-changers in a teacher preparation program.

The data in Table 2 indicate that the mean, as an expression of attitude toward teaching as a career, was more positive for the non-teacher participants in the current study than for a group of non-teachers in 1959. The mean attitude for Group 1 and Group 2 compare favorably with the mean attitude of a group of persons who have completed or are participating in a newly instituted graduate-level teacher preparation program that was designed partly for persons seeking a change of career.

Table 2

A Comparison of Group Means for Non-Teachers

Using the "Attitude Toward Teaching

As A Career Survey" Instrument

Group	Study	Year	Mean
Non-Teachers	Merwin & Divesta	1959	41.17*
Group 1 (Army)	Current Study	1986	30.42
Group 2 (Navy)	Current Study	1986	35.64
Group 3 (Veterans)	Current Study	1986	32.74
Career Changers	Current Study	1987	26.67

* range of scores is 11 (positive) to 66 (not positive)

Table 3

Summary of Participants Leaving Service

After Selected Lengths of Active Duty

Years of service	U.S. Army Group 1	U.S. Navy Group 2	Veterans Group 3	All
4 to 7	48.0%	27.3%	38.5%	39.8%
8 to 12	26.7%	13.6%	7.7%	17.5%
13 to 19	5.3%	0%	1.9%	2.9%
20 to 30	20.0%	59.1%	51.9%	39.8%
	(N=75)	(N=44)	(N=52)	(N=171)

One of the criteria used for selecting participants in this study was the number of years served on active duty. The minimum qualifying period was established at four years, an amount of time equal to one voluntary commitment plus one additional year's extension. The maximum number of years that can be served is limited to thirty by federal law. Table 3 shows the distribution by groups according to periods of service.

Table 3 shows that slightly more than one-third of all participants in this study left the military after serving from four to seven years. The veterans in college group, comprised of members of all uniformed services, most closely reflected this general trend with 38.5 percent in the four to seven year category. The U. S. Navy participants left service in the fewest numbers (just over one-quarter of the total sample) during this period while the U. S. Army participants left during this period in the greatest numbers (almost one-half of the total sample). During the service period spanning from eight to twelve years, less than one-fifth of the total study group departed. The group with the fewest separations from service was the veterans in college group. Between the two groups representing active duty personnel, the rate of those leaving the Army after serving eight to twelve years was double that leaving the Navy. In the third period of service, thirteen to nineteen

years, there was the least separation activity, with the mean being about 3 percent. None of these were from the Navy group. For the period of service representing twenty to thirty years, the time required for retirement benefits, over one-half of the Navy group qualified. This was also the case for the veterans in college. Only one out of five, or twenty percent, of the Army group participants stayed in the service this long.

This study poised three questions about the attitude toward teaching as a career held by members of the armed forces about to separate. The answers to those three questions follow. The findings relative to research question one (What is the attitude toward a career in teaching among persons leaving the service?) were:

1. The attitude among persons leaving active military service toward a career in teaching was positive.

2. The mean attitude for the military groups participating in the study was more postitive than the mean attitude of a non-teacher group taking the same survey.

3. The mean attitude for the two military groups participating in the study was slightly less positive than the mean attitude of the veterans already enrolled in college group taking the same survey.

4. The mean attitude for the two military groups was slightly less positive than the mean attitude of the career changing group.

The findings relative to research question two (Are there any significant differences among the uniformed services regarding their attitude toward a career in teaching?) were:

1. There was a statistically significant difference between the Army group and the Navy group in response to survey item number five, "Teaching may be all right for some people but not for me." The Army group had a more positive attitude than did the Navy group.

2. There was a statistically significant difference between the Army group and the Navy group in response to survey item number six, "I am not convinced of the importance of a teaching career." The Army group had a more positive attitude than did the Navy group

The findings relative to research question three (What, if any, is the relationship of the attitude toward a career in teaching between those persons just leaving military service and veterans currently enrolled in college?) were:

1. The mean attitude toward teaching as a career for the veterans already in college group fell midway between the mean attitude of the Army group and the mean attitude of the Navy group.

2. There was one instance of a statistically significant difference between the veterans already in college group and the Navy group in response to item number five, "Teaching may be all right for some people but not for me." The veterans already in college had a more positive attitude than the Navy group.

These findings hold a great deal of importance for institutions seeking a new source of candidates for teacher preparation programs. The picture presented here indicates that a group of individuals with a strong positive attitude toward a career in teaching exists among people who have left the military. The portion of that group which is retiring has an average age of forty-seven while the remaining portion will range downward into the mid-twenties. This group exceeds the national average for racial diversity. The black population distribution for the United States is twelve percent. For the Army and the Navy the distribution of this minority group is twenty-one percent. The concentration of this group as well as other minority groups holding a positive attitude toward a career in teaching represents an excellent source for potential teacher candidates among groups currently under represented in the teaching profession. Twenty-nine percent of the almost two million service persons have completed one or more years of college. For their entire term of service

these people have heard about and seen the advantages that education provides toward personal and professional growth. This is a group of individuals holding much promise as potential candidates for graduate and undergraduate teacher preparation programs.

The minor differences between the groups which show up on the attitude survey, while statistically significant, do not diminish the overall positive attitude of this population toward a career in teaching. The attitudes of the military groups in this study closely mirror the attitudes of the veterans already in college group, a majority of which were in a teacher preparation program. Moreover, their attitude compares favorably with the attitude of persons in a teacher preparation program that is attracting career changers. The study clearly deliniates a group of people who can be brought into the career field without protracted invitation.

The following conclusions and recommendations are offered:

1. The positive attitude toward a career in teaching demonstrated by people leaving the military is of sufficient strength to indicate that their recruitment for teacher preparation programs would obtain effective results.

2. Military installations conducting personnel separation processing can serve as a focus for teacher preparation program recruiting.

3. The need for attracting a culturally diverse population into teaching can be best served through teaching career recruitment among separating military personnel. The high distribution of minority groups in the military and their positive disposition toward the career field of teaching should increase their overall numbers in the field of teaching.

4. The mere existence of a population holding a positive attitude toward a career in teaching and, moreover, having the financial support to defray major costs involved in a life-career change warrants careful study and cultivation by the profession.

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This survey is absolutely voluntary and completly anonymous. It is being conducted by a private indivdual and is not related or associated with the armed forces on the U.S. Government. The survey is designed to gain an insight of the views held by persons leaving the service about the field of education. It is being done as part of a doctoral degree program by a student at Memphis State University.

Please indicate:

1. Your grade/rate/rank. ____ 2. Years of active duty. ____

3. Education level (please check only one).
   a. College degree _____ b. No college degree _____
   c. Working on a degree _____ d. Hours completed _____

ATTITUDE TOWARD TEACHING AS A CAREER

DIRECTIONS: Here are some different kinds of statements. They will help to tell how YOU, personally, FEEL about teaching as a career. For each statement, write on the short ling preceeding the statement the number which best describes your agreement or disagreeement according to this code:

+3 = Strongly agree	-3 = Strongly disagree
+2 = Moderately agree	-2 = Moderately disagree
+1 = Slightly agree	-1 = Slightly disagree

_____ 1. Teaching is about the best job that I can think of.

_____ 2. There are a lot of advantages to teaching.

_____ 3. I wouldn't care for the work of a teacher.

_____ 4. Teaching would be a wonderful occupation for anyone.

_____ 5. Teaching may be all right for some people but not for me.

_____ 6. I am not convinced of the importance of a teaching career.

_____ 7. Teaching, as a career, is not worth the sacrifice of going to college, long work hours, and low pay.

_____ 8. I am sure I would enjoy teaching.

_____ 9. Teaching is as godd a job as any.

_____ 10. There are more advantages than disadvantages to teaching.

_____ 11. I would be willing to take any job related to teaching.

(adapted from Merwin and DiVesta, 1960, used by permission)